1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

f. Housekeeping

Every married woman has her own hearth and granary, and she works very largely alone when cooking and cleaning; but in one essential activity women who are neighbours in a village regularly co-operate, and that is in fetching firewood. We never saw a woman going alone; usually there is a group of three or four up to a dozen or more. Firewood must be fetched two or three times a week, and the journey and the collection of the wood takes from four to ten hours, depending upon the distance of the village from a patch of forest or bush. Thus the women spend up to thirty hours a week fetching wood, and it is with village neighbours that this time is spent, not with relatives from other villages. If a woman is ill her friends will help in bringing wood and cooked food for her. Some co-wives co-operate in this way, fetching wood together, and helping each other in sickness, but whether they do or not depends upon personal friendship. Often it is with an unrelated neighbour, rather than with a co-wife, that a woman works most closely. Only when co-wives are sisters, or aunt and niece, are they expected to work together regularly.

Village neighbours—women—also co-operate in the preparation of feasts, as we shall see in the following chapter.

g. Economic co-operation beyond the village

The economic relations of fellow villagers, and the changes taking place in these relations, cannot be understood without some reference to economic co-operation beyond the village boundaries. As we have already indicated, co-operation with relatives living in other villages is very important: cattle, the most prized possession of the Nyakyusa, circulate within kinship groups, between father and son, brother and brother, and between affines, and these same relatives assist one another in cultivation and building. But beyond the circle of kinsmen and village-mates there was formerly little economic co-operation. Each village and kinship group was largely self-sufficient, buying from outside little save iron spears and hoes, medicines, salt, cosmetics, and brass or copper wire for ornament.

Smiths were essential to the Nyakyusa economy for they

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

286 and the river banks. Large nets, with wide or fine mesh, are made with floats and sinkers attached, pulled at both ends by means of ropes. *Ilitimbilo* is [226] a net used only at night, when the water is beaten with flat sticks to drive the fish into it. There are also small hand nets, and special nets made for catching special kinds of fish.

Weaving is a very ancient craft, and may have begun with the weaving of mats, which are at present made from banana fibre, grass, reeds, palm leaf, and the tough outer skin of palms. These mats are used for sleeping on, laying out grain to dry in the sun, straining pounded maize, and a dozen other uses. [438] Long grass or palm leaf mats are used by Europeans as carpets; and there is a good trade in palm leaf bags for carrying rice, and great mats for packing cotton for the European market.

Very good cloth is still woven in the Igale district by the Safwa. The art was formerly universal among the Konde, but has now died out before inferior trade goods. At Igale the cloth is either plain white, or mixed black and white, though dyes for other colours are known. These cloths make excellent bath towels, and a trade could be developed if encouragement were given. Bark-cloth is very extensively made, 287 and there has been a recent revival of this industry consequent on the exorbitant price of European goods since the war. Women wear the long *ilyabi* or loin cloth of bark, and nothing else; but, especially in the Igale district, complete suits are now made for men, wonderfully cut and sewn shorts and jackets, and

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

inheritance ensure that a limited number of young men are absorbed into the senior generation and live with the older men, sharing their activities and from time to time holding office as headmen or priests of that generation, and the selection in each generation of young men who are *not* the sons of village headmen, or chiefs, or headmen of the past generation, ensures that commoners without office are constantly recruited to the hierarchy of rulers. In short, power is distributed.

(*e*) RITUAL AND SECULAR BONDS

As in so many societies, economic and ritual links extended, traditionally, further than political links.[1] Selya was dependent upon BuKinga for iron and the Kinga came to fruitful Selya to pray for fertility. The priests who came to pray brought the hoes. The many independent chiefdoms of Selya and the Mbaka valley acknowledged the spiritual overlordship of the Lwembe by sending sacrifices to him, and it was through the network of hereditary priests like Kasitile, Mwamakunda, Mwalukuta, and Nyama of Selya, and the Kinga priests Kikungubeja, Nsyanigwa, Kyamba Kitali, and Silobwike that wider bonds were maintained. Mwaipopo (116) when he was granted a Court which gave him the secular leadership of Selya, failed to make any acknowledgement of Lwembe's traditional power, and it was Kasitile who later urged him to do so. The western chiefdoms of the Nyakyusa still buy medicines and bark-cloth from the Ndali to the west, and have done so for many generations, but no common ritual links them as it does Selya and the plain with BuKinga. The trade was of lesser importance than that to the east, for it does not seem to have included iron, though the Nyiha who share a common culture with the Lambya, the western neighbours of the Nyakyusa, are known to have been skilled smiths.[2] With the Sangu to the

[1] cf. E. Colson, 'The Plateau Tonga of Northern Rhodesia' in *Seven Tribes of British Central Africa* (ed. Colson and Gluckman).
A comparison with the frontier in West and South Africa where economic and religious expansion compelled the establishment of Government is instructive. Cf. W. K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, vol. ii, part ii, pp. 160-8.

[2] D. Kerr-Cross, 'Geographical Notes on the Country between the Lakes Nyassa, Rukwa, and Tanganyika', *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, vi (1890), p. 289. Elton's suggestion that some of the Nyakyusa iron came from the west is discounted by Cotterill. J. F. Elton, *The Lakes and Mountains of Eastern and Central Africa* (1879), p. 371 and map, cf. J. Thompson, *To the Central African Lakes and Back*, vol. i, p. 272.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

a missionary, was warned by her servants before Godfrey Wilson's arrival in her neighbourhood 'not to go out at night as there were *abanyambuta* about, sent by the Government to kill people and take their blood', and women going for firewood made a long detour to avoid his camp. One was overheard asking when she caught sight of him: 'Is that the man who kills people?' Angombwike explained that, since all really strong Nyakyusa medicines contained human blood, it was argued that European medicines, which were so powerful, must contain it also. 'They follow their own customs.'

It seems obvious to the Nyakyusa that Europeans must have strong medicines because their confidence and success are so great. Moreover, it is held (in theory) that they are immune to attacks from witchcraft. X, who had been a clerk and lost his *job, and was bitter, expanded on this:*

People say that Europeans have *inyifwila* (*vide* p. 38), see they are brave, they do not fear, if someone seizes a spear they do not fear, they just come to him, they are very brave. And also the witches say that they are unable to choke Europeans. When we hear people boasting of their mystical power (*amanga*) we always say to them: 'But if that is so, go and choke a European, show us!' Then they always say, 'Oh no, we can't do that, when we go to a European house at night we find it all lighted up and flaming, we can't get near them.' I think this is the power of the Holy Spirit which you Europeans have.

He came of a well-known family of doctors and perhaps spoke from first-hand knowledge. He just laughed at the suggestion that the light might come from lamps. But the fact that Europeans were held to be immune did not prevent our servants and friends attributing our recurring attacks of malaria to witchcraft.

(c) DOCTORS

Among the Nyakyusa, as perhaps in every society, the doctors with the greatest reputation are those at a distance, and a high proportion of the practitioners in the country are of foreign lineages, their fathers, or grandfathers, or great-grandfathers having come in, bringing medicines with them, and begun to practice. In fact, we were assured that there were *no* Nyakyusa doctors who were famous, they were all Sangu, or Kinga, or Kisi, or from Ngonde or Misuku in Nyasaland, but detailed investigation proved this to be false. The trade in medicines from a distance is a very old one and continues today. As we have seen,

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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791 *inyifwila* comes from west of Ngonde, or east of the Kinga; *mwafi*
[439] came from 'Nyasaland'; medicine for fertility of the fields from
[278] Misuku which is rich in food; war medicine from the Sangu and
[438] Kinga. Whether neighbouring people get medicines from Bu-Nyakyusa we do not know—no one ever suggested it, but it is likely that they do.

Since foreign doctors and medicines have the highest reputation
[177] new treatments are welcomed. This is where the practice of medicines differs radically from the rituals directed to the shades in which the charter is tradition, and any deviation must be justified. But the willingness to accept something new did not lead to any systematic experiment, or any regard for experiment as such.

791 Anyone who chooses, and can pay the fees, can become a
278 doctor by apprenticing himself to a practitioner of repute, but it is very noticeable that the majority of well-known doctors come from families of doctors, the medicines being passed down from one generation to the next and sometimes taught to wives as well. Lyandileko, who has often been quoted, was taught certain medicines by her husband, and had a large practice. The diviners we knew were all men, but many women know a number of medicines. Once in practice, a doctor may add to his knowledge by buying a medicine from a fellow practitioner or exchanging medicines with him. One doctor we knew had paid two bulls for the secret of his protective medicine (*umkota gwa ipingo*). The teaching includes what plants or other ingredients to collect and how to 'cook' them, i.e. what to mix together and what quantities to use. As elsewhere in Africa, it is the material substance, usually vegetable, which is held to be important in any treatment. The spell—the words addressed to the medicine—is of little significance except that when vengeance magic is prepared the man on whose behalf it is done may say the name of his enemy (if he knows his identity) and state his own innocence in a phrase like the following: 'Return this medicine, thou Kyala, I have done no wrong whatsoever to cause me to be killed; if he says he will kill me let him die.'

791 The doctor (*isanga*) who 'knows medicines' is distinguished
793 from the priest or officiant (*unyago*) who knows how to conduct a ritual directed to the shades or heroes. The *unyago* uses medicines in celebrating rituals, and he or she may be able to collect and prepare plants himself, but he sometimes has to apply to a doctor

245 Bananas and plantains are grown all over the district except in the highlands to the north and west. Numerous local varieties abound, with a red plantain and the *Sukari* variety of [262 banana as recent introductions, and are used 273] exclusively for food, no beer being made. They [251] are mostly dried and pounded with pestle and mortar to be used as flour, although they are also eaten whole after roasting.

244 Sweet potatoes are extensively grown. They are planted on contoured ridges from 3-4 feet high. Planting distances vary from 6 inches to 1 foot in either direction. They are planted in March to May and north of Tukuyu take eight [252] months to mature, but south of that place four months is sufficient. Sweet potatoes are eaten boiled or roasted.

243 Finger millet is used more for beer-making [262 than for food. It is always sown broadcast in November to January and harvested in March 273] to May. The land is first hand-hoed and all grass put into heaps and burnt when dry. In the highlands to the west the trees are lopped and branches piled in heaps to be burnt. Contoured ridges are put in at intervals depending on the slope of the land. The harvesting is carried out just before the grain is ripe by cutting off the heads and stacking in the field while ripening proceeds. The heads are then collected into large baskets and steeped in water for a day, after which they are taken out [251] and rubbed with the hands to separate the grain from the chaff. The millet is then dried and stored in earthenware pots or mud-covered baskets until required. It is reported that it can be stored for five or six years by this method, but I have not verified this personally.

244 Beans are nearly always interplanted with 262 maize or sown in banana plantations and the local seed is of mixed varieties. They are 262 eaten boiled as a relish with other food such as maize. The leaves are also eaten dried or fresh.

245 Groundnuts are grown in the medium and 251 lower altitudes. Planted in November to February and harvested in April to July, they are dried in the shell and eaten raw.

243 Rice is grown on the lake shore and also in the neighbouring foothills. It is sown broadcast in November to February and harvested in May to August. Yields are not high in the foothills, being about 6-7 bags of paddy to the acre. Many local varieties are grown, such [252 as Musafiri, Mwangulu, and Marula. The hill 432] rice is eaten boiled, but most is sold hand-hulled in the markets for purely local consumption.

[P.238A]

241 Other foodstuffs grown are coca-yams, cow peas, pigeon peas, Bambarra groundnuts, ginger, cardamon, groundnuts, wheat, pumpkins, peppers, citrus, sugar cane and European vegetables, including a quantity of European potatoes. [177]

Economic Crops

245 177 One of the main cash crops is coffee, which was introduced about 1900 by the Berlin Lutheran Mission, but it was not grown by natives until 1930 when an attempt was made to organize an industry. It had already been tried from 1924 onwards by Europeans but had gradually died out, giving place to tea.

245 Native coffee has not been truly successful and many reasons are suspected for this. In effect, the coffee suffers from many pests and diseases and yields are so low as to be almost uneconomical even to a tribe of very low individual annual income. It has become obvious that coffee can only be grown by natives if shaded by bananas and mulched heavily with banana trash. Multiple-stem pruning is gaining favour.

Seedlings are planted out in December and the first crop is obtained four years after. The area planted rose in 1939 to 5,864 acres and the number of native planters to 7,966. Yields, however, are low, varying from 131.4 kg. to 20.4 kg. parchment to the acre. Hemeleia leaf disease and yellow and white borer are prevalent all over the coffee-growing area. Over the period since 1932 the price paid to natives has averaged 44 cents a kg. for parchment. [136]

[438] [432] All coffee is collected and sold by Native Authority after rough grading and, in order to encourage better preparation, much lower payments are made for the inferior grades. A native staff is employed to visit coffee plots and to give instructions, and it is noticeable that the quality of preparation varies with the price.

175 243 The cultivation of rice on the lake shore was started by Chief Koroso in 1896 with seed obtained from Arab traders in Nyasaland and the Moravian Mission issued further seed in 1898. Being an innovation, rice was not popular and little was grown except for small local sales. In 1917 the Government issued seed and tax was paid in rice instead of money. Interest was hereby aroused and the cultivation of rice was started. In 1932 several other kinds of seed were issued and now sixteen varieties are found. "Faya", which was issued in 1929, gives the best yields and is the variety chiefly grown, other varieties being Bungala, Marula [65] 243

[P. 239 A] Nyakyusa Kinga FN18

cattle in the district in the 1941 census was about 2.3 head per taxpayer or 55 head per square mile. Certain land is set aside each year for grazing, where stock is not able to interfere with the produce plots. Compensation for trespass of cattle on cultivated land is only paid among people of the lake shore.

Parts of the land to the west of Tukuyu have been badly eroded by cultivation and over-grazing, and it is only since 1935 that anti-erosion rules have been made to check the tendency for bad cultivation. Since they were brought in, however, the majority of the tribe have become very keen on seeing the effect that well-controlled cultivation has on crops. The following are the Native Authority Rules concerning anti-erosion:—

"Throughout the Rungwa District, all natives shall follow orders regarding cultivation designed to prevent soil erosion as demonstrated and enjoined by the Agricultural Officer.

(*a*) All ridges and terraces shall be contoured and not follow the slope of the hill.

(*b*) In the case of cultivation done on the flat and not on ridges or terraces, a large ridge and ditch shall be dug at the top of the plot to remain permanently and be repaired from time to time."

The Wanyakyusa have never been dependant on outside sources for any of their food, but in their own territory there is no iron for making hoes nor clay for making earthenware pots. The former they were accustomed to get from Ukinga, on the eastern boundary of the district in the Livingstone mountains, and the pots were, and are still, made only by about 500 members of the Wakisi tribe living in a village on the lake shore at the extreme south-western point of the district. The Wakisi are really of Ukinga origin and inhabit the eastern, northern and western shores of Lake Nyasa. They grow no food except cassava, and that only recently, and apart from the one village that makes the pots, their only work is as paddlers of canoes and fishermen. Most of their fish and pots are exchanged for food.

Since the Tukuyu District is so thickly populated and the inhabitants concentrated, it has been found necessary to create produce markets at comparatively short distances. Transport from these markets, during wartime, has become difficult. The natural outlet for Tukuyu native foodstuffs is the Lupa Goldfields, which lie about 100 miles to the

(*Received for publication*

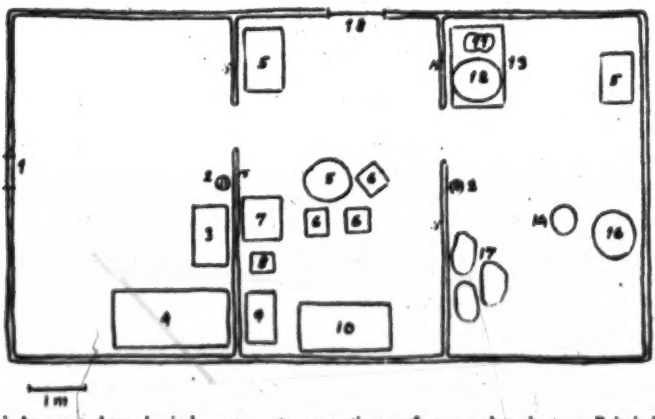
438 north. Before the war, the goldfields gave work
316 to about 15,000 natives, chiefly Wanyakyusa,
[464] and most of the foodstuffs from this district went there. The goldfields are gradually closing due to difficulties in obtaining spares, and it has been necessary to look for outlets for Tukuyu produce elsewhere. Should the goldfields open again after the war, and large-scale mining start, there is a great future for produce grown in Tukuyu.

434 The main income of the tribe is derived from agricultural, military, mining and public works sources, and it is estimated that in 1941 the average annual income per man, woman and child was about Sh. 10 per year. It has risen considerably since, as over 4,000 men have joined the military and a large part of their salaries comes back to the district in the form of remittances. The agricultural source, from which a larger part of the tribal income
[464] accrues, is from sales of rice, maize and other foodstuffs. A fair number of Wanyakyusa also work on the tea plantations.

241 The picture sketched above will show that the district is inhabited by a tribe whose agriculture is of great interest, since the variety of crops, from wheat in the highlands to paddy and cotton on the lake shore, is perhaps unrivalled in so small an area elsewhere in
181 East Africa. It has not been possible to fill in the picture with details of the people's character, but it is worth mentioning that the Wanyakyusa are a people difficult to administer, argumentative, litigious, self-willed
153 and at times inclined to truculence. Nevertheless their intelligence is such that they are willing to be persuaded, and, once convinced of the benefit of any change, adopt it with energy. This is instanced by the way they have in a few years accepted the principles of anti-erosion to such an extent that now there is perhaps 90 per cent control in the well-populated areas. It should, however, be stressed
134 that, though the soil is not being eroded to
241 any great extent, it is still being impoverished, since increased cultivation for the war effort has involved breaking a great deal of new land with a consequent lessening of fallow. Over-cropping in the hilly country is very great and, in order to prevent further emigration, it be-
[185] hoves the native planters to learn to put something back into the soil in the form of mulch or compost. If care is not taken, a comparatively prosperous country will one day become like so many parts of Africa, where a losing struggle is fought with Nature to obtain a sufficiency for the people's needs.

on 21st September, 1943)

12: Bisgaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17 Nyakyusa



Baba's house. 1, barred window; 2, posts supporting roof; 3, wooden chest; 4, Baba's bed; 5, table; 6, chair; 7, cupboard; 8, chair with three suitcases; 9, suitcase; 10, table with bookshelf; 11, bag; 12, large basket, *ilimbo*; 13, low stand for 11 and 12; 14, millet jars; 15, low partitions; 16, *ilimbo* in which the millet is washed; 17, rice in bags.

cupboard. This seemed very strange and a bit disorderly. On a chair were three suitcases on top of each other.

It was interesting to see, in the store-room, the very crops that belong to the man, viz. rice and millet, the most valuable produce. The rice was in bags, and it is quite probable that this man had bought it from the districts near Lake Nyasa, where it thrives well. On higher ground, rice cannot be cultivated.

The millet was contained in a basket, 1 m in height, 55 cm broad at the bottom, and narrower, 35 cm, at the top.

Further, there was a large, beautiful earthenware jar, which he had bought. This was intended for the millet. And there was also a cylindrical container for the washing of the millet when it was brought home from the field. This vessel was 55 cm in height and 85 cm across.

All three houses had a small window with bars or shutters.

The inside of the houses lay in semi-darkness, as the only light is admitted through the doorway, and in some cases through the diminutive barred window. Nevertheless, the interiors give a nice impression, because of their tidiness, height, size, and cleanness. And how cosy they are, when seen at night; the door is closed, you gather round the fire and delight in perfectly cooked rice, which is the favourite dish at this principal meal of the day.

Johnston says (1897, page 453) that the greater number of the houses are circular in their plan and very much like bee-hives in shape; their walls are wickerwork filled with mud cobs, and they have thatched roofs. He also reports